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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a rural Hispanic community's efforts to identify and develop a program for gifted students in grades 2-6 who are also mildly to moderately handicapped (learning disabled, behavior disordered, or communication disordered). The "Twice Exceptional" (2E) program, in Los Lunas, New Mexico, is a modified full-time separate classroom with seven goals: (1) student identification; (2) differentiated curricula; (3) full utilization of technology such as computers; (4) mentorship development; (5) family systems support; (6) staff training; and (7) dissemination. This report summarizes the program's philosophical considerations and history and then describes the selection process; transportation services; equipment acquisition; funding and cost considerations; announcement/notification procedures; support from parents, the community, and the school administration; and counseling concerns. Program successes with 11 enrollees are briefly reviewed. Future program plans and advantages and disadvantages of implementing such a program in a rural area are noted. Appended are a program summary, identification criteria, and an outline of curriculum components. Includes seven references. (DB)

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF RURAL GIFTED STUDENTS WITH HANDICAPPING CONDITIONS

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Abstract

Rural communities historically have had difficulty identifying and meeting the needs of their low-incident special education students. However, these same communities are committed to serving all special needs students. This presentation describes one rural, Hispanic community's efforts to identify and program for its gifted students who are mild-to-moderately handicapped. The identification process and special programs offered to these students are discussed. Comparisons and contrasts are made between rural and urban schools.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF RURAL GIFTED STUDENTS WITH HANDICAPPING CONDITIONS

Background

The city of Los Lunas is a community of 7,200 that is located on the Rio Grande River some 25 miles south of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Its altitude is 4,850 feet, with an annual rainfall of 8.1 inches. The community has been tri-cultural since the 17th century (White, Hispanic, and Native American--primarily Pueblo Indian). The community has a great range of recreational assets including fishing, hiking, golfing, camping, skiing, horse racing, and historical tours; with an economic base including retail, education, government, service, and agricultural activities. It has a local radio station (KARS) and a local newspaper (Valencia County News Bulletin).

The Los Lunas School District is the tenth largest public school district in New Mexico, serving not only Los Lunas but many outlying communities such as Bosque Farms and Peralta; altogether the district covers a total area roughly the size of the state of Rhode Island. The District has 8 public school sites, with a projected enrollment of 7,134 for the fall of 1991, and an annual budget which in 1990-91 is almost $18 million. This includes 5 elementary schools, grades 1-4; an intermediate school for grades 5-6; and a middle school for grades 7-8, as well as a high school for grades 9-12.

It is at the Daniel Fernandez Intermediate (DFI) School that the students first come together in one body. There are some 419 5th graders and 415 6th graders at DFI, and approximately 70 students in full-time special education programs for severe and profound handicaps.

At DFI, as at other school sites, classes begin at 7:45 am and conclude by 3:20 pm. Core curriculum courses include reading, spelling, written expression, math, science, social studies, and art. In addition, all students take P.E. and Music and Band are electives. Every single classrom in the school has at least 1 computer available for student use.

Introduction

Like all rural school districts, Los Lunas is faced with how to provide services to students with special

needs when there may only be a handful of students eligible for any current or new program being implemented. To illustrate how a new federal or state program can be creatively integrated with the needs of rural school districts, this presentation will concentrate on how a new program for gifted children who also have handicapping conditions was successfully introduced at Los Lunas, New Mexico.

In 1988, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act was passed. This Act, among other features, provided pilot grant funds to allow for identification and programming to be developed for various special populations of gifted students; including migrant, women, native americans, rural, and gifted/handicapped students. One of the pilot grants given was to the Department of Special Education at the University of New Mexico (UNM), with Dr. Elizabeth Nielsen as Director, to identify and provide service to gifted/handicapped students. Programming planning was done in the Spring and Summer of 1990, and the program was implemented in the Fall of 1990 at 12 school sites; 8 in the urban Albuquerque Public School system, 1 in the rural Los Lunas Public School district, and 3 at private schools in Albuquerque.

The specific thrust of this Twice-Exceptional Child Project is the identification, service, and evaluation of twice-exceptional elementary and middle school children (i.e. potentially-gifted students with special learning needs resulting from mild to moderate handicapping conditions). The seven goals of the program are: 1) to identify the students; 2) to develop differentiated curricula 3) utilizing technological items such as computers; 4) to establish mentorship programs; 5) to provide family systems support; 6) to train the teachers and administrators involved; and 7) to disseminate the results at state and national levels. Further details of this program are provided in the attached Appendix A.

Philosophical Considerations

How did this newly proposed Twice-Exceptional (2E) program fit into the philosophy of education as seen by the Los Lunas School District? At first glance, there appeared to be a conflict. First of all, Los Lunas subscribes to the concept of mainstreaming, that all students should be integrated into the regular classroom where possible, particularly those with mild and

moderate handicapping conditions. What special education services are needed can then be provided in the regular classroom by specialists who come to the classroom.

Secondly, Los Lunas feels that labelling kids LD, BD, or CD reinforces their already poor self-esteem. However, the administrators at Los Lunas, and in particular Thomas Gabaldon, Director of Support Services (including Special Education programs) for Los Lunas, made an exception for the 2E program. This was because it was felt a double labelling such as gifted and handicapped would have positive and negative aspects that would cancel each other out, so that the child's self-esteem would not be adversely affected. This would then allow for a program that could work on both the child's strengths (giftedness) and weaknesses (handicaps). It turns out that this has been exactly what has happened; the children in the 2E program do not feel inferior, and in fact the additional computers, software, special field trips, and other activities have made them the envy of many of their peers in regular classrooms.

However, in order for the 2E program to really work and be successful, the Los Lunas School District (LLSD) feels that we need to work on changing the mind set of the teachers, the administrators, and the parents, as well as the kids, as to what labelling, giftedness, and handicapping are all about. We all need to learn to look at kids in a different way than the old labelling approach that creates a "cage for every age." What is important to remember however is that rural districts need to develop a clear philosophy of what they want their educational system to do; as well as a flexibility and willingness to take risks in order to get the job done. You need to know your philosophy first, then you can pick and choose the times when you can risk freeing yourself from it.

History

Los Lunas already has special education programs for their mild, moderate, severe and profound handicapped children in need. It also has gifted programs running for their exceptional children at the other end of the spectrum. The question has always been what to do with mild and moderately handicapped children.

How did Los Lunas find out about the 2E program?

The answer to this is critical for all school districts, but particularly the rural districts. Rural areas tend to be relatively outside the immense flow of information exchange found in urban areas. How then to access this information? Los Lunas is fortunate to some extent because it is a rural area in proximity to a large urban area. Thus, a great deal of information can be obtained through normal, formal channels such as newspapers, radio and TV, brochures, newsletters, conferences, in-services, and the like. Rural areas tend to rely more on word-of-mouth exchanges of information, while intermediate areas such as Los Lunas can rely on both formal and informal exchanges. LLSD found out about the 2E program through informal channels; that is, a Los Lunas parent found out about the program in a conversation with a parent from Albuquerque. However, what she did in response to this news is something that can be planned for.

LLSD has a very active parent group that is involved in a lot of different ways in the educational process. LLSD is fortunate in that they also have a formal mechanism set up to allow for parent input into educational planning and policy-making. Parents come regularly to the LLSD monthly meetings of a special PL 94-142 advisory committee, called the Support Services Advisory Council, and they are voting members along with the teachers and administrators who attend. The above-mentioned parent called the 2E program to the Committee's attention in October of 1989, when the 2E grant proposal had not yet even been submitted to the federal government. In response, Thomas Gabaldon, then head of Special Education for LLSD, contacted the head gifted teacher at the Middle School in Los Lunas, Karen Lowe, and she in turn contacted Dr. Nielsen at UNM to get more information about the program. LLSD consequently wrote a letter of support for the program which was submitted as part of the grant application. So a parent initiated the whole process and envolvement in the 2E program for Los Lunas, and LLSD was in on the actual planning and application process.

The 2E grant was approved and funded by the federal government in February of 1990 (Nielsen, 1989). Several meetings took place that spring between Los Lunas personnel and the UNM grant administrators, to discuss what kinds of different approaches the grant could use. Los Lunas was particularly impressed that the guideline for acceptance to the 2E program as far as IQ was concerned would be to follow the federal limit of 120

IQ, rather than the state of New Mexico limit of 130 IQ (plus additional qualifications). This meant that a lot more of the kids at LLSD would be eligible, in particular the Hispanic and Native American kids, who often score low on IQ tests (which are usually not normed for them). Over half of LLSD students are Hispanic, but with some Native American Pueblo Indian students as well. Thus, the lower IQ requirement allowed for a greater potential number of students for the program than would have existed if New Mexico state standards were applied. Having enough students eligible to fill program requirements is always a critical issue in rural areas, and with the easier requirements, it was felt that there would thus be sufficient numbers of students to make the identification and programming effort worthwhile.

Selection Process

Students

Once the program was definitely funded and Los Lunas accepted as a site location, procedures were set up to select the school site, the teachers involved, and the children to be referred to the program. As we will see, the student selection process was to have a critical impact on site selection, which in turn impacted teacher selection for the program.

The problem faced by Los Lunas was whether to try to serve all kids that were eligible, based on the relatively small numbers of kids in a smaller school district that would be eligible, or whether in some way to limit acceptance to the program by more narrowly defining the criteria for acceptance.

As it turned out, the narrowing that had to be done was a natural one by grade level, rather than by IQ or other criteria. The process was initiated by Thomas Gabaldon, who accessed computer files for all kids in the district with a mild or moderate LD, BD, or CD condition. He then went through those files to select out kids with IQs of 120 or better. On this basis, some 20 children were preliminarily identified.

The only two schools of the eight in the district that appeared to have a significant enough number of students potentially eligible were Daniel Fernandez Intermediate School (DFI), and Peralta Elementary School. Only one kid was identified as being eligible at the 7th grade level in the whole district. Further,

some half dozen kids were considered to be just a little too young (K-2nd) to benefit by the program, particularly if they were put in a class along with 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders.

As a result, Los Lunas decided to limit their 2E program focus to grades 2-6 initially, instead of the 2E grant's larger range of grades 2-9. Thus, the initial plans were to have two 2E classes, serving all 20 potentially identified students, with one 2E class at Peralta Elementary (grades 2-4), and one 2E class at DFI (grades 4-6). However, budget cuts imposed by the state legislature reduced the 1990-91 budget of $15 million by almost $1 million dollars, so creative ways had to be found to trim the 2E program, along with other programs. This meant that a smaller number of students would be served, and some 13 students actually began the class in the fall. Fortunately, the administrators in the district were not tempted to eliminate the program altogether, which what often happens to new programs in the face of severe budget cuts. This adaptability in the face of drastic changes is another example of the advantage that a rural district has in beginning new programs. If the commitment to the program is there, it can be sustained even in the face of severe funding restrictions.

Site

DFI was uniquely located for the 2E program. Besides being centrally located to the largest numbers of eligible students to begin with, it also was physically located right next to Tome' Elementary. A new module unit was to be placed right on the boundary between DFI and Tome' Elementary school. With a location in this new, centrally located modular unit, the 2E program could draw on students from both intermediate and elementary school groups for part of the day, without radically disrupting the teaching process for either the elementary or intermediate students in the program. Distances were short and the same playground was even shared by the two schools.

Teacher

Los Lunas set up a formal application and interview process for teachers who wanted to teach the 2E program. In March, a description of the position was disseminated throughout the district, a meeting was held

with UNM personnel in attendance to provide more information (with about 20 teachers in attendance), letters of interest were solicited from three teachers, personnel files of those interested were reviewed, and interviews were then held by a selection committee consisting of the Director of Personnel, Director of Special Education, and the affected Principal. The priority items that the selection committee looked at were: 1) the area of certification of the teacher; 2) years of experience in the area of gifted and/or special education; and 3) whether the teacher was currently working in that field of gifted or special education. While handicapping experience and/or endorsement wasconsidered desirable, it was not considered to be as crucial as the gifted experience and endorsement.

On the basis, Sharon Tregembo was selected as the most qualified, since she had training, certification, and experience, with an MA in both gifted education and in special education of the handicapped, with experience in teaching both in the Albuquerque Public School district (APS). Sharon Tregembo was also the only one of the three applicants already teaching at at the intermediate level at DFI anyway, so she was already familiar with the administrators and teachers at the site chosen.

Level of Service

It was decided to use a modified full-time separate classroom for the 2E students selected to be in the program. What this meant was that most of the students were in the 2E program for the entire morning, were pulled out into a regular mainstream combined class for an hour in the afternoon, and finished the day up in the 2E classroom again. Because of its central location, the 2E class allowed flexibility in programming for individual students, so some students spent part of their day pulled out to other classes as well.

The choice of using a full time separate classroom rather than a pullout or some other approach was made for a variety of reasons. The primary reason for this choice was because 2E involved a new concept and approach to students. It involved kids who were gifted, and because 2E programming included a lot more high-tech activity in the form of computers, modems, calculators, and the like, it was felt that the kids needed full emersion in such a program, and not the short contact approach of pullout programs. Further, other studies

have shown that computer use is very successful with gifted/handicapped children (Summa & Kelly, 1989; Hill Top Spectrum, 1986-87; Babcock, 1984). Also, this approach gave the teacher more classroom time, and less transition time to have to deal with. Finally, longer contact time was needed to address other 2E program activities, such as the use of long-term thematic units like "survival." Thematic units are selected and carried over from one subject or content area to another throughout the day, and would not work well in a pull-out design.

Other Selection Issues

There are a high number of minority students (Hispanic and Native American) being served by Los Lunas schools. Numerous studies have shown that these children are at risk of being overlooked or not accurately tested with tests that are not normed for them (Palmer, et al. 1989; Cummins, 1988; Rodriquez, 1985). Thomas Gabaldon and the other administrators paid special and extra attention to minority students in the selection process. Those who were borderline as far as meeting program requirements were given the benefit of the doubt, since it was assumed that their IQ scores were probably an underrepresentation of their actual intelligence. Because of the 2E program approach, exceptions or waivers to the formal identification requirements were allowed on a case by case basis.

Los Lunas initially considered using an even lower IQ cutoff score of 115 because of the above-mentioned concerns, rather than the federally mandated score of 120 or the state cutoff of 130 IQ. As it turned out, there were enough students to meet the 120 IQ cutoff standard. However, if the program expands next year to additional classrooms, the IQ cutoff of 115 may be reinstituted. It is important to keep in mind in rural district programming that while the local grant administrators (as well as state and federal government officials) impose program criteria, they are often willing to make exceptions and grant waivers to their criteria if justification for it can be supplied. This is an important point for rural schools to keep in mind when they are trying to serve small numbers of program-eligible students in new programs. For example, the 2E grant administrators required a 3:1 ratio of males to females in the program for the urban schools in the grant, because there were many more eligible

students than slots available. However, since Los Lunas was attempting to serve all of its students, and because of budget and site location adjustments, it ended up with 10 males and 2 females in its 2E program; so the requirement was waived for Los Lunas.

For purposes of reference, the details of the admission requirements to the 2E program are supplied in Appendix B. Details of the curriculum for the 2E program are too extensive for this presentation. However, a summary of the main components and subcomponents are covered in Appendix C.

Transportation

The kids enrolled in the 2E program had to be moved from their home school bus to the elementary school bus for this program, which did not cost any more money, but simply meant reassigning kids to different buses. Since most of the kids were from the Tome Elementary or DF Intermediate schools, this did not involve much adjustment in transportation arrangements, and involved no additional cost.

Obtaining of Equipment

Several new modular units had been planned to be put in place at the boundary between Tome Elementary and DF Intermediate; it was simple a matter of paperwork to assign one of these units to be in the 2E classroom site.

The other major equipment item was obtaining computers that would support the technological component of the 2E grant. Technology, utilizing such items as computers, calculators, modems, and Language Masters, has been found to be extremely useful to gifted/handicapped students, because they have the intellectual skills generally to master computer use, and at the same time the computer is a non-threatening tutor that is endlessly patient and correcting without causing embarrassment.

Thomas Gabaldon had already applied for grant funds under PL 94-142 to purchase basic computers for <u>all</u> programs in the Los Lunas school district, with the intention of placing at least one computer in each classroom. Some extra ones had also been ordered. The Support Services Advisory Council in the district met in the Spring of 1990 to decide what to do with the extra computers. This Council had parents, teachers, and

administrators as members; the membership being open to the extent that anyone who shows up for the meetings has a right to vote. It meets the first Tuesday of every month, and has anywhere from 6 to 30 participants. This advsiory committee decided that the kids in the 2E program would need extra computers, based on program needs, so they had LLSD put the computers in place and have them running at the beginning of the school year. Additionally, a single computer with a modem hookup to various University and State computer network systems was provided and installed by 2E grant funds.

Apple software and hardware were decided upon because Los Lunas already had Apples in various classrooms. Fortunately, this decision matched with the 2E grant's choice to also use Apple hardware and software.

Funding and Cost Considerations

The Twice-Exceptional program never really impacted the LLSD budget by requiring extra funds. The teaching slot was already a regularly-funded position, so that LLSD just reallocated the time to the 2E students. The transportation system was already in place as well and did not require excessive additional mileage, because a school site was selected that was closest to the majority of students being impacted and selected for the program. The space for a portable modular classroom had already been allocated in the budget, so extra classroom space did not have to be purchased or built. Computers had already been planned and purchased for the school; the additional ones available were simply reassigned to the 2E program.

The 2E grant itself did provide support that could have future cost for the program when federal funds are no longer available. However, by that time LLSD hopes to have several teachers already trained who could in turn provide training and in-service support to additional teachers as the program expands. Most computer programs and other materials supplied by the 2E grant could easily be obtained by the school as part of its normal budget for purchase of classroom materials; it simply means asking for different materials than are normally requested. The only cost that should be mentioned as a special additional cost is that of installing a telephone line and purchasing a modem. The modem cost is modest, but installation of phone lines to modular classrooms can be very costly, and should be

paid attention to by any rural school developing a new program that involves computer modem use.

Another factor administratively that costs nothing extra but is extremely helpful is that because of its proximity to Albuquerque and the large number of students who transfer back and forth, LLSD hired a consultant to set up the same computer data base and tracking system used by Albuquerque's school district. This makes it much easier to track students back and forth between the two districts.

Announcement/Notification Procedures

LLSD did not have to make special announcements about the 2E program's existance or start-up for the parents, since it was a parent that initated the whole contact procedure. Parents, as well as teachers and administrators, were updated on the progress of the grant and selection process as it proceeded through their attendance at monthly meetings of the Advisory Committee.

Los Lunas is small community, so by word of mouth everyone generally knew about the program. Thus, it was not necessary to advertise formally or send out letters or even present articles in the press concerning the program. Parents felt no pressure to push to get their kid in the program, since the original plan was to serve all eligible kids anyway (it is hoped that next year this objective will be achieved). However, plans are currently underway to begin running articles in the local newspaper about the programming, but this will be more on the order of informing the community about the program's successes in its first year.

Obtaining Support for the Twice-Exceptional Program

There were several different levels at which this was done; with parents, community, and LLSD administration.

Parents

Since the parents were in on the very initial stages of grant involvement through the Advisory Committee, and in fact helped initiate it, they felt involved from the start. Plans to include everyone that was eligible left everyone feeling their child would not

be overlooked.

This past year, Los Lunas also purchased two complete video tape sets of the Dunn & Dunn Learning Styles program, complete with an inventory to be taken of all students for 22 different learning style considerations. There are plans to involve the parents more closely with the 2E program by having them and the teachers view these tapes in special group meetings. The actually learning styles of the students will be included in their I.E.P.s; and thus compliment the 2E concept of multisensory approaches to education.

LLSD feels that parent involvement in education is critical; so much so that final plans have just been approved to extend the concept of parent involvement in special programs like the 2E program to cover all parents from grades K-6 (elementary and intermediate) This plan is in the final formulation stages, and will be implemented later this spring. The program is called P.A.T.S., because it involves parents, administrators, teachers, and students. This new group will have a regular organization with regular meetings and agendas, and will thus compliment and extend the 2E program emphasis on parent involvement.

The school district also has special grants that have a parent involvement component. The 21st Century grant from the State of New Mexico is working on providing parents as tutors, which can be utilized by the 2E program; and there is an Exxon grant is to provide funds to restructure the way we provide education and learning to students by involving parents and teachers in a partnership.

Community

So far, there has been no direct input in programs from private sector businesses in the community. However, Los Lunas already has an active gifted program, and this program is currently utilizing mentors from the community. This mentorship program includes, for example, engineers from Sandia Lab, parents, teachers from other schools, city commissioners, and archeologists from the University. This gifted mentorship program can be drawn upon by the 2E grant as it enters its second year and begins to fulfill its own mentorship goals.

Administration

Support at this level consists primarily in having

Thomas Gabaldon, as Director of Support Services, including Special Education for LLSD, keeping the other administrators informed of the status of 2E program activities at regular administrative meetings. Thomas shares comments with the administrators that he has gotten from teachers and parents, as well as kids in the 2E program. There has been a lot of interest recently, with parents of the 2E 6th graders calling various administrators to express their support for an additional 2E class at the Middle School next year. One administrator has even expressed an interest in having a 2E class in each of the eight schools in the district, based on the success of the current class.

Counseling Concerns

Again, here is a way in which rural areas are unique, or at least Los Lunas is unique, compared to more urban areas like Albuquerque. LLSD has 2 psychologists on staff full time, plus an MA in Social Work full time, to provide direct conseling services to kids and parents in both individual and group settings. In urban areas, there are diagnosticians who specialize in testing and identifying kids, and separate personnel like counselors and social workers to provide needed counseling services. However, LLSD staff not only do the testing and referral, but are involved in placement decisions, and additionally provide counseling services and intervention where needed. This way, kids who are tested are less apt to be lost in the shuffle, as far as actual follow-up is concerned, to make sure they are receiving needed and recommended services.

Further, LLSD staff are already familiar with the background and needs of the kids. This becomes critical in any type of crisis situation that requires immediate intervention and counseling. LLSD staff can quickly react to a problem that has developed with a child, and can immediately intervene with 1 on 1 counseling, since they are not only trained to do this, but already know the child's background because of their involvement with the child's diagnostic reports and placement.

LLSD counseling staff also do a great deal of direct consulting with not only regular education teachers and staff, but also with special education personnel and with administrators. The consequence is that these counselors have a good overview of what is needed, where to go to get immediate results, and what to do in a broad variety of situations involving

students. They have an overview that counselors in larger school settings do not have, including the ability to anticipate problems and do specific preventative activities.

Program Successes

Pre- and post-test comparisons have been implemented but are not yet available, so direct measurement of program success and improvement in knowledge, content areas, self-esteem, and the like are not yet known. However, there have been measureable successes. With 13 students in the program, 1 student has moved out of state and 1 was moved back into a regular education class by his parents, leaving 11 students currently in the program in the Spring of 1991.

The 2E students at DFI take the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) every year, including the cognitive development segment. The 2E 5th graders this year all said that when they took it last year as 4th graders they had a difficult time of it, and had to struggle. This year they all agreed it was very easy for them.

The 6th graders in the program are all very, very excited at the prospect of a new 2E program being established at the Middle School that they can attend next year, and all of their parents have been calling teachers and administrators expressing their support and thanks.

Concerning individual gains, Brian has increased his reading level by 4 grades and his math level by 2 grades this year; while both Billy and Michael have improved by 2 grade levels in each area.

On a more anecdotal level, Brian's 5th grade teacher from last year said that Brian's reading was so poor that whenever he read in front of the class he was so embarrassed that he would turn his back to the class while reading out loud. This year, on two occassions, he has read before the entire school of some 900 students at assemblies. Ricky got a first prize in his age group for the Design and Advertising contest sponsored by the Albuquerque Tribune and the Albuquerque Journal. Nicholas was named student of the month in March of 1991 for all of the DFI 6th graders (415 students).

None of the kids in the 2E program had ever made the honor roll before, but Billy had made it all three periods for the 6th grade this year; while Michael and

Mike made it the second period for the 5th grade and Alfredo made it for the 6th grade; and during the current or third period Rhiannon made it for the 6th grade along with Billy. Alfredo's teacher from last year, as well as the DFI principal, have both noted how much he has blossomed this year. He had been so poor in reading that he has been in special education classes his whole life. Now, he is doing so well that he has become a different person, and is a leader in his class this year because, due to program and teacher efforts, he realizes for the first time in his life that he is not dumb. One of the other 2E sites, Ernie Pyle Middle School, gave Rhiannon the award for being the best computer pen pal of all the students in the 2E school sites they communicated with via modem.

Future Program Plans

Beginning next year, with 5 kids matriculating from the 2E Intermediate school program to the 7th grade Middle School program, and at least 3 new kids identified at the Middle School level, it looks like LLSD will be able to establish an additional 2E class at the Los Lunas Middle School next year. Los Lunas is considering starting an integrated program for the 2E kids at that level, again using the 120 IQ level cutoff. The ultimate goal would be to integrate these students back into the regular classroom by the time they got to high school. If there are only enough funds, equipment, and technical support from the 2E grant to support one 2E program, Los Lunas will probably be able to support this Middle School program on its own next year.

However, it is possible that the 2E program may be extended next year to additional school sites. Since DFI school is splitting into two sites next year, the potential exists to have the 2E classroom at DFI to also split into two intermediate level programs; so that there would be three in all (including the new one being implemented at the middle school level). As mentioned earlier, there is even a proposal to have a 2E program at every one of the 8 building sites for next year! If this should occur, various new selective procedures may have to be implemented, such as lowering the IQ level for admittance to 115 IQ, or developing or utilizing testing that is standardized for diverse ethnic groups.

Another area where LLSD have plans for next year is to begin a program to do counseling in the home. All of

Los Lunas' counselors and social workers are bilingual, which is a big advantage in working with a largely Hispanic community. This home counseling idea can also be extended next year to having teachers do home-visits with all of their parents. This would give the teachers a better feel for the kind of environment each child has to deal with outside of school. LLSD may even combine the two ideas into a team approach, so that the teacher and counselor could do home visits as a team, with the counselor doubling as an interpreter. Clearly, these plans would benefit 2E programs as well.

Longer range plans are underway to upgrade the technology even more than it currently is. LLSD is considering locating satellite receiver dishes at all school sites, not only for computer enhancement, but to allow the students, teachers, and administrators to begin using modems to link to national and international networks with other students, teachers, and administrators. LLSD is currently using Dr. Richard Mulholland as a consultant from Oregon to use Telecommunications Network Communication Systems as one way of breaking down the barriers that get erected in peoples minds as a result of labelling them by type of handicap. Since the 2E program already is dealing with labelling issues and with computer useage, it is in a unique position toe help lead the way in new educational directions for LLSD.

Advantages of Implementing New Programs for Handicapping Conditions in Rural Areas

First, one of the big advantages with new programs in rural areas is that the ties and communications between administrators, teachers, parents, and students are closer. Not only are the ties closer within each group, but also between groups. Everyone knows each other or knows about each other, and information is more easily and quickly exchanged.

Second, there are fewer levels of bureaucracy to deal with. If there is a problem with a student or a teacher, Thomas Gabaldon, as head of both Special Education and of Support Services for the District, simple calls the person in. At an urban school, the teacher usually goes to a head teacher, the head teacher to the principal or building supervisor, the principal to an area coordinator, the area coordinator to the head administrator for the whole district, and finally head administrators go to the superintendent. While some of

these levels exist in the rural areas, in the interest of efficency they can often be (and often are) bypassed.

Third, rural programs can be much more efficiently run. The end result of the above two factors is that as problems come up, they can be alleviated much more rapidly, and there is time to even do preventative activities before problems get out of hand.

Disadvantages of Implementing New Programs in Rural Areas

The major problem with new programs is finding the numbers of students affected to justify putting a new program in place. It is hard under PL 94-142 to get age-appropriate programs in place. However, even this can often be gotten around. With programs covering grades K-12, given the right mix of personnel and administrative support, a rural district can implement programs that cut across several grade levels or schools in order to get the required numbers of students.

Related to the problem of finding adequate numbers of students to put in rural programs is that of cost per unit vs. funding per unit. If the funding unit (such as, for example, the budget for grades K-4) stays intact and is not affected by the program being implemented, the kids involved will generate the same amount of money regardless of where they are placed within the system. This reduces cost considerably.

A second, and lesser disadvantage with LLSD is that it is in close proximity (20 miles) to Albuquerque and their large urban school district. This means that LLSD regularly gets students and their families transferring in from Albuquerque, who often assume that Los Lunas has the same structures and facilities and services that APS does. LLSD has fewer specialized services than APS, but on the other hand because it has fewer levels of bureaucracy, there is much more direct access to top level administrative personnel. LLSD administrators are often on the phone talking directly to parents about their problems; while in Albuquerque parents rarely have direct access to higher level administrative personnel. Thus, APS parents often do not take advantage of the kind of personal contact that a rural district like LLSD can offer, because they are (at least initially) not aware of it.

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THE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL CHILD PROJECT: IDENTIFYING AND SERVING POTENTIALLY-GIFTED STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Purpose

The thrust of this project is three-fold: The identification, service, and evaluation of "twice-exceptional" elementary and middle school children (i.e., potentially-gifted students with special learning needs resulting from mild to moderate handicapping conditions). The primary site for this project is the Albuquerque Public Schools. The district has demonstrated an active interest in its gifted/handicapped students and already has identified over 50 elementary and middle school students who qualify both as "gifted" and as either L.D., B.D., or C.D.

Identification

A major task of this project will be to develop and test a model for the identification of "twice-exceptional" students. The identification model created by this proposal will use appropriately normed and/or modified traditional measures as well as nontraditional measures of potential. The model, its recommended criteria, and its suggested assessment measures will be specific enough to meet the needs of a large, multi-cultural New Mexico school district, yet flexible enough to be used by the state's numerous rural districts.

Initial, minimum identification criteria for inclusion of a child within this project are: a) a measured I.Q. score at or above 120; this I.Q. score could be either the full scale, or the verbal score, or the performance score; b) qualified as "gifted" in one of the following three areas: academic, creativity, or critical thinking; and c) qualified as either learning disabled, behavior disordered, or communication disordered in language (not articulation).

Service

Secondly, this project will establish five **high-impact** classes (one of which will be at a rural location), for gifted students with learning, communication, and/or behavioral problems. The "twice-exceptional" students in these classes will be supported by: a) a project coordinator, b) a reading specialist, c) trained teachers, d) a mentorship program and e) a special technology-based curriculum individualized to address their unique learning styles, modality preferences, strengths, deficits, and interests. Additionally, the families of these high-impact students will be given assistance in developing and maintaining parent support groups. The services of a professional counselor also will be available to them.

In addition to the high-impact classes, six urban, and one private school will be designated as **low-impact** sites. "Twice-exceptional" students at these sites will receive the services of a project assistant; their teachers will participate in a special training course; and their families will be provided assistance in developing and maintaining parent support groups.

All other APS elementary and middle schools whose population included identified Gifted/Handicapped students will be designated as **non-impact** sites. This project will not provide these non-impact sites with special interventions; however, many of the schools already are serving these students in their special education and/or gifted programs.

Evaluation

The third thrust of this program is an evaluation component. Prior to developing an identification model, an Identification Team, directed by Dr. Ann Beckwith, will evaluate a variety of standardized instrument through hypothesis-driven research and will design and field-test innovative assessment techniques. The types and intensity of intervention will be evaluated through comparative studies using repeated measure, regression discontinuity, and gap reduction design and analyses. All data collected through this project will be recorded within APS's comprehensive "Computer Based Diagnostic Reporting System." This system will be modified as need to incorporate additional data. The data will be available for on-going research and will become permanent baseline data for a longitudinal study of "twice-exceptional" children. This longitudinal study will begin with this project and continue beyond its funding years.

Goals

1.0 To develop, test, and implement successful procedures for identifying potentially gifted children with special needs (i.e., "twice-exceptional" learners).

2.0 To develop, implement, and determine the effects of differentiated program curricula, and instructional strategies for "twice-exceptional" students.

3.0 To investigate the effects of an intensive, technologically-based curricula on these "twice-exceptional" student's ability to remediate and compensate for their handicapping conditions.

4.0 To establish and investigate the effects of mentorship programs for "twice-exceptional" students.

5.0 To investigate the impact that "twice-exceptional" children have on their family systems.

6.0 To provide training and support to those serving as the facilitators of learning for these "twice-exceptional" children.

7.0 To disseminate applied research, materials, curricula, and successful program models developed through this project in order to improve service to "twice-exceptional" children at state and national levels.

APRIL 1990

TWICE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD PROJECT
MINIMUM IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

In order to be nominated for the Twice-Exceptional Child Project, the child must meet the following minimum criteria:

a. Has been identified as having a learning disability, behavior disorder, or communication disorder based on New Mexico Special Education State Standards; **and**

b. Has either a full scale, verbal, or performance WISC-R intelligence score of 120+; **and**

c. Has at least one of the following New Mexico Special Education Gifted Criteria:
   - An intelligence test score of 130+
   - A creativity test score within the gifted range
   - A critical thinking test score within the gifted range
   - An achievement test score within the gifted range.

MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL CURRICULUM

A merging of the following curriculuar approaches:

A. APS Regular Education and Special Education (including gifted education) existing curricula

B. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

C. The Autonomous Learner

SUBCOMPONENTS OF THE CURRICULUM

1. TECHNOLOGY INTERVENTIONS
2. THEMATIC APPROACH
3. LEARNING STYLES
4. LEARNING MODALITIES
5. FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEMS
6. MENTORS (BIG BROTHER/BIG SISTER)